



ASSOCIATION OF POPULATION CENTERS POPULATION ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

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March 16, 2009

The Honorable Carolyn Maloney
2331 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Maloney:

On behalf of the over 3,000 members of the Population Association of America (PAA) and over 30 population research centers comprising the Association of Population Centers (APC), we are writing to express our interests in H.R. 1254, the Restoring the Integrity of American Statistics Act of 2008.

First, we congratulate you on your leadership and for introducing this legislation. The bill elevates the visibility of the Bureau's current organizational challenges and suggests provocative reforms worthy of serious consideration. After discussing the bill, the PAA and APC Board of Directors agreed to endorse concepts articulated in the bill. During the course of our deliberations, however, several issues were raised that we hope Congress will consider as the bill moves through the legislative process.

Creating fixed term for Census Bureau Director--The fixed five-year term for Census Bureau Director would allow the Census Bureau to avoid the disruptions caused by a change in administration around the period of the decennial census. Enactment of the legislation in 2012 would mean that, under normal circumstances, a change in Directors would occur on a predictable schedule in years two and seven of each decade. While the Census Bureau Director would be nominated by the President and subject to Senate confirmation, the fixed term is likely to translate into a higher level of continuity and professional independence in the Bureau's operations.

Establishing Bureau as an independent agency--While more controversial, we believe that establishing the Bureau as an independent agency gives the Bureau's leadership more autonomy, especially during the annual appropriations process. As an independent agency, the Census Bureau would negotiate directly with the Office of Management and Budget and Congress without having to consult and seek approval from the Department of Commerce. The agency would be responsible for its own fate and have the independence that is accorded to other federal research agencies important to our organizations. Nonetheless, moving the agency could pose a number of opportunities and challenges. We hope Congress will discuss the possible relocation ramifications by holding hearings or briefings that involve data users, current and previous Administration officials, and outside experts.

Once again, thank you for representing the needs of data users and for bringing much needed attention to all of the federal government's statistical agencies. Our members appreciate your service. We hope you will call on our organizations to assist you and your staff on this and other issues of mutual interest.

The Population Association of America (PAA) (www.popassoc.org) has over 3,000 individual members who conduct research on the implications of population change. PAA members include demographers, sociologists, economists, health scientists, and statisticians. The Association of Population Centers (APC) (www.popcenters.org) is comprised of over 30 universities and research groups nationwide whose mission includes fostering collaborative demographic research and data sharing and translating basic population research for policy makers.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Mullan Harris, Ph.D.
President
Population Association of America



Lynne Casper, Ph.D.
President
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cc: The Honorable Thomas R. Carper